



MEDIA RELEASE

ANDREE CLARK BIRD REFUGE EUTROPHICATION

SANTA BARBARA, CA – June 20, 2012

The City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department is closely monitoring and evaluating management techniques to address the recent algal bloom and decay (eutrophication) at the Andree Clark Bird Refuge (Bird Refuge). This process causes the noxious odors and has been a problem since the 29-acre Bird Refuge was constructed in 1929. The Bird Refuge was originally a salt marsh that received fresh water from Sycamore Creek. Construction of the railroad in the 1880s re-routed Sycamore Creek and thereby eliminated the primary source of fresh water. At the base of an 844-acre urban watershed, the only fresh water that enters the lake now is from rain water and urban runoff. As a result, there is poor water circulation, as well as high nutrient levels and low oxygen levels in both the lake water and sediment.

The City has evaluated and implemented a variety of management techniques over the years to reduce the odors when lake eutrophication occurs. In 2009, the last time eutrophication was a significant problem, water levels in the lake were very low. The City added freshwater in an effort to improve water quality. Water levels in the lake are too high at this time to add water. Instead, in an effort to aerate the water and thereby increase oxygen levels, improve water quality and reduce odors, the Parks and Recreation Department began operating a small motorized skiff this morning (June 20) and will continue throughout the day. We will continue to monitor the lake each day and take actions as feasible. We anticipate that the conditions at the Bird Refuge will improve over time.

The Parks and Recreation Department recently completed the first phase of a 5-year vegetation management project to improve water flow in the culverts that enter the lake, reduce the potential for flooding and improve mosquito abatement. This work will continue while longer-term water quality and restoration options are pursued. Additional work to develop longer-term solutions to improve water quality and restore the Bird Refuge are scheduled to begin in the new fiscal year.

For more information, please contact Santos Escobar, Parks Manager at 564-5433, or Jill Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director at 564-5437.

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